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Advancement of women

Joint Inspection Unit

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Agenda item 14 (a)

Social and human rights questions: Advancement of women

An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the members of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection United entitled "An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women" (A/54/156–E/1999/102).

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Annex

Comments of the Secretary-General on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "An evaluation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women"

I. Introduction

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/48, which requested an evaluation "of the Institute which should include detailed analysis of the reasons for the financial and staffing situation of the Institute and the implications thereof for the Institute at all levels".

2. In accordance with the requirements of that resolution, the Inspectors carried out fact-finding missions to Santo Domingo and New York, held interviews and used questionnaires to obtain relevant information to facilitate the evaluation. On the basis of their evaluation the Inspectors made several recommendations aimed at raising concern among the international community and the United Nations system on the need for renewed commitment in support of INSTRAW and at enhancing the role of the Board in fund-raising, appealed to Member States to strengthen their financial support and called upon the Secretariat to provide efficient administrative services.

II. General comments

3. The report is a historical review and evaluation of INSTRAW performance and financial and staffing situation since its inception. It refers to the need for greater cooperation between INSTRAW and other research and training entities of the United Nations, such as the United Nations University, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization at Turin. However, no concrete suggestions are made on the matter.

4. While the report establishes a close association between the beginning of the Institute's financial crisis and the merger proposal of 1993, the data provided in table I indicates that the first and the highest drop in voluntary contributions to INSTRAW occurred in 1991, two years before the merger proposal.

5. The Secretary-General endorses the recommendation that INSTRAW should continue to fulfil its mandate and supports the appeal to Member States to make financial resources available to INSTRAW to enable the Institute to complete its ongoing programme for the biennium 1998–1999 and realize its Strategic Plan and Work Programme for 2000–2003.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Institute should continue its work to fulfil its mandate is indisputable, but the survival of INSTRAW can only be assured by the commitment — and recommitment — of Member States. It is vital that Member States take the following steps:

(a) Reiterate their support for INSTRAW in resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, recognizing that the present crisis is of a short-term, financial nature, and further recognizing the high quality and very good "value for money" of the programme outputs of the Institute over the longer term;

(b) Resolve the immediate financial crisis by making resources available to enable the Institute to complete its operations for the biennium 1998–1999;

(c) Strengthen financial support in the medium term, thus giving INSTRAW the opportunity to build on its achievements through the realization of its Strategic Plan and Work Programme for 2000–2003;

(d) Move swiftly to modify the Statute of INSTRAW, where necessary, to facilitate other recommendations of this report noted below.

6. The Secretary-General generally endorses the thrust of this recommendation, which would enable the Institute to implement its mandate and its programme of work. The Secretary-General, however, acknowledges that the survival of INSTRAW depends on the commitment of Member States and that there is an urgent need for Member States to make

available to the Institute adequate voluntary resources to enable the Institute to fulfil its important role.

Recommendation 2

While Member States have a primary role to play in reaffirming, through their donations, their commitments to INSTRAW, several actions need to be taken to raise the visibility of the Institute, strengthen the fund-raising function and raise the rate of return to fund-raising activities:

(a) It is essential that the Board of Trustees take a more active role in fund-raising through the regional networks of each individual Board member and the ex officio Board members. This network could be expanded by co-opting eminent persons onto regional fund-raising committees. A subcommittee of the Board should be established to coordinate this work;

(b) There should be a strengthening of regional offices of INSTRAW to aid visibility and facilitate fund-raising, as originally envisaged in the Statute, perhaps supported initially by contributions in kind, such as office space. The regional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, as ex officio Board members, could assist the Institute in setting up regional offices, while existing proposals for establishing an INSTRAW office in Geneva should be explored further. In addition, INSTRAW should expand its existing network of national focal points, putting emphasis on national research and training institutions;

(c) A full-time fund-raising post should be added to INSTRAW's professional staffing structure, located in the Institute's Liaison Office in New York, to facilitate contact with the missions of Member States and ensure that the Institute has a high profile in the preparations for the annual pledging conference. This post could be at the First or Second Officer level (P-4/P-3);

(d) Fund-raising activities must be revitalized, along the lines presented below, in an effort to widen the donor base of the Institute:

- **Approaches to Governments with a view to increasing funding through regular pledges;**
- **Approaches to bilateral technical cooperation agencies;**
- **Approaches to private foundations;**
- **Development of joint programmes on the basis of co-financing with United Nations system organizations and other multilateral organizations;**
- **Approaches to the business community;**
- **Approaches to private benefactors;**
- **Co-financing of projects with non-governmental organizations;**
- **Seeking contributions in kind.**

This list is not original or exhaustive, but it does serve to underline the complexity of developing a comprehensive fund-raising strategy. Fund-raising activities should also be closely linked to INSTRAW's Strategic Plan and Work Programme for 2000–2003;

(e) The Institute should submit fresh proposals to the United Nations Foundation, which is responsible for approving projects for funding from the Turner gift, particularly as "population and women" is one of the three areas of concentration for the Foundation. The Institute should pay close attention to the project criteria of the Foundation in designing the project proposals;

(f) In respect of the immediate financial crisis, the Controller of the United Nations should monitor the Trust Fund of the Institute and adjust the current allotment in line with available resources so that the Institute might continue to operate at least through the end of the current biennium to ensure smooth programme delivery.

7. The Joint Inspection Unit recommendation for more active involvement of the Board of Trustees in fund-raising activities as called for by the Statute of INSTRAW is welcomed.

8. Concerning the need for the revitalization of the fund-raising activities as outlined in recommendation 2 (d), it should be pointed out that many of the approaches suggested under that recommendation have already been tried. An evaluation as to why initiatives such as the international dialogue and the various extrabudgetary project proposals developed and submitted by INSTRAW, including to the United Nations Foundation, were not successful in attracting support, might have been useful.

9. Funds have been authorized for the Institute to enable it to operate until the end of 1999.

Recommendation 3

(a) As a matter of urgency, an experienced women in development professional should be appointed as Acting Director at the Institute's headquarters in Santo Domingo, and the United Nations Secretariat, in full consultation with the Board of Trustees, should expedite

the recruitment process to minimize the negative impact of the Director's post being vacant;

(b) The Executive Direction and Management branch of the Institute should be strengthened. It should include the Office of the Director, with overall responsibility for policy direction, coordination, liaison, fund-raising and advocacy, and a Deputy Director, with responsibility for day-to-day management of the Institute. The post of Director demands strong interpersonal and presentational skills to maximize the visibility of the Institute and help secure funding, and this should be a major criterion of the selection process;

(c) The original plan to have three separate substantive units should be implemented, with the Research Unit, the Training Unit and the Information, Communication and Documentation Unit each being headed by a Senior Officer, each supported by at least two other Professional officers. Nine Professional posts in the substantive units of INSTRAW, properly graded to reflect the nature of the work, would seem to be a minimum to facilitate a stimulating intellectual environment and to attract staff;

(d) The administration post at the Institute has been graded at various times as P-5, P-4 and P-3. Given the administrative support which INSTRAW receives from the United Nations Secretariat, there could be an Administration Officer at the Second Officer level (P-3) located at the Institute's headquarters;

(e) As noted above, the Liaison Office in New York should be staffed by one Professional post with primary responsibility for fund-raising;

(f) To facilitate recruitment and improve staff mobility at the Institute, the restriction that service be limited to INSTRAW should be lifted;

(g) Given the long delays in the recruitment process, the United Nations Secretariat should initiate, as soon as possible, recruitment procedures for all the Professional posts currently vacant, so that when funds become available appointments can be confirmed and further delays avoided.

10. Given the financial situation, it has not as yet been possible to circulate an announcement for the post of Director. An officer-in-charge *ad interim* has been designated.

11. While the Secretary-General fully supports the concept of staff mobility, recommendation 3 (f) to lift the service limitations of INSTRAW staff would have to be reviewed in the context of a Secretariat-wide policy review of all staff serving under similar conditions of service in other departments/offices.

12. Regarding the concerns raised about the recruitment process in recommendation 3 (g), it should be noted that delayed recruitment was not the sole factor for the delays. For example a suitable candidate for the P-3, Chief of Administration, post was identified and a job offer was made in October 1997, however, the candidate subsequently declined the offer. Another candidate was identified and was ready to report for duty on 1 January 1999. Owing to a limitation of funds the recruitment had to be cancelled. Vacancy announcements for other posts (P-4, Chief, Information, Communication and Documentation, and P-5, Social Affairs Officer) were circulated several times during the past two years; nevertheless, the posts could not be filled either because of the unavailability of funds or the lack of a suitable candidate. The recruitment against the D-1, Deputy Director, post, which became vacant at the end of December 1997, was deferred to 2000, again because of financial constraints. Preliminary processing for vacant posts at the Professional level has been under way pending receipt of adequate funds.

Recommendation 4

(a) When Professional post vacancies occur at the Institute, or can be foreseen, the Secretariat should expedite the international recruitment process so that posts may be filled in as short a time as possible, bearing in mind the large impact of vacancies on a small core staff;

(b) In line with the recommendation of the United Nations Board of External Auditors in April 1996, INSTRAW should be compensated for the "infructuous appropriation" of its funds which arose when the Chief of Administration was "requisitioned and loaned elsewhere";

(c) The Secretariat should review its administrative procedures in respect of INSTRAW with the objectives of greater efficiency in the provision of services, and improved cooperation and transparency.

13. Recommendation 4 (a) is directly associated with recommendation 3 (f). As noted in paragraph 12 above, the Secretary-General believes that the staffing problem at the Professional level is related to diverse factors not addressed in the current Joint Inspection Unit report but which need further evaluation.

14. The matters referred to under recommendation 4 (b) and (c) are being reviewed, in particular with respect to recommendation 4 (c), to facilitate greater efficiency.

Recommendation 5

Member States could consider an amendment to the Statute of INSTRAW to permit a subvention from the United Nations regular budget to finance the post of Director and other core posts, as is the case for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

15. In connection with recommendation 5, it is important to recall that the decision to determine what should be funded under the regular budget of the Organization is the sole prerogative of the General Assembly and that consequently, whether posts for INSTRAW should be financed from the regular budget can only be made by the General Assembly. It should also be pointed out that article VI.1 of the INSTRAW Statute provided that the activities of the Institute should be funded by voluntary contributions from States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, foundations and private sources. This article would have to be amended were the Joint Inspection Unit proposal to be accepted.

Recommendation 6

(a) Member States should restate their commitment to the mandate of INSTRAW in resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly;

(b) The division of labour between the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and the United Nations Development Fund for Women should be carefully monitored to avoid overlap and duplication. The coordination activities of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality should be refined, and activities which are directly relevant to INSTRAW's mandate should be included in the work programme of the Institute.

16. Recommendation 6 (a) is fully supported.

17. The proposal in recommendation 6 (b) to avoid overlap and duplication is sound. It reflects current approaches to the three entities. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality serves as a forum for information exchange and the promotion of programme coordination and collaborative arrangements among organizations of the United Nations system. Since the Committee does not have its own budget or extrabudgetary resources, its activities are implemented in a collaborative manner through task forces and task managers. Its members carry out the Committee's activities by financing them from their agency's resources. Therefore, tasks are not assigned but taken on a voluntary basis. In this connection, INSTRAW volunteered to be the task manager for the compilation of the gender training database with initial funds provided by the United Nations Children's Fund. It had to withdraw from the project, owing to resource and staffing constraints.

Recommendation 7

(a) The following proposals put forward in the Strategic Plan and Work Programme, 2000–2003 should be pursued:

- **A more proactive role for the Board of Trustees, including involvement in policy formulation, research, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, and fund-raising;**
- **Consideration of the possibility of establishing an endowment fund;**

(b) The Institute should reinforce its existing cooperation with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization at Turin, and seek closer relations with other research and training institutions of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations University, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, as well as academic and training institutes outside the United Nations system.

18. Recommendation 7 (a) and (b) can be fully supported.